



COMMISSION ON AGING

A CALL TO ACTION

August 2010

To: Montgomery County Executive, County Council Members, and
All Candidates for Election in Montgomery County as County
Executive and County Council Members

From: Elaine Kotell Binder, Chair
The Montgomery County Commission On Aging

Subject: A Call to Action on Behalf of Seniors

The Commission calls on the County Executive, County Council and all candidates for the office of County Executive and County Council to commit publicly to ensuring that all older adults can age successfully in Montgomery County and that you will work with the Commission to ensure that seniors' needs are addressed in both policy and programs.

We ask that you respond to this call in writing and that you work with us as we continue to identify both policy and programmatic priorities that concern seniors.

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging serves as an advocate for the health, safety and well being of the County's senior residents. The Commission supports both safety net services for frail older adults and programs to meet the interests and needs of those who are healthy and active.

With a current population of more than 110,000 individuals over the age of 65 and a projected growth that increases the percentage of seniors in the population, it is imperative that the County fulfills its commitment to follow up on the recommendations that emerged from the Senior Summit convened by County Executive Leggett in November 2008.

We believe the time has come for the County to focus its attention on our growing population of both vulnerable and vital seniors by addressing their transportation,

housing, recreation, nutrition and other needs. Twenty-five percent of County seniors age 65 and older live alone. An estimated 18% of seniors have a limitation in performing activities of daily living. Older persons who live alone are more likely than those living with spouses to be in poverty. We must also focus attention on middle-income seniors who rely on transportation and socialization services to maintain their vitality. Finally, it is critical that we take into consideration the needs of diverse groups in our community and work collaboratively with them.

We recognize that there are considerable financial constraints on the development of new programs and services. However, we believe that this is the perfect time to begin planning for the future – to consider creative and innovative approaches to serving the burgeoning population of older adults. It is in the County's economic interest to retain our current senior population and to attract others to age here. The County currently has a significant number of individuals who have accumulated wealth and whose contributions to the tax base will be substantial if they remain in the County as they continue to age. In addition, many of these seniors make significant contributions to the County through their volunteer efforts. Finally, we believe that there is considerable cost savings to providing services that enable seniors to live safely in more independent conditions rather than in institutions.

Therefore, we ask for a commitment to:

Build a comprehensive vision and agenda for seniors that consider the geographic, economic and cultural diversity that exists in the County. Included in this agenda will be policies around housing, transportation, recreation, health, nutrition and other areas that are essential components of successful aging. We need a vision and agenda with innovative approaches that will help establish Montgomery County as a Community for a Life Time.

Develop a specific, long-term, comprehensive Senior Transportation and Mobility Plan. Transportation is the single most frequently mentioned concern of seniors. The Commission seeks to work with the County in beginning to develop a transportation and mobility plan that incorporates both public and private services. Despite current financial limitations, it is time to develop a plan that: considers existing services and current County research; examines best practices from across the country, and plans for the use of technological advances in order to create an overall approach to providing transportation that meets the needs of our older population.

Continue the commitment made by the County Executive for the Senior Sub-cabinet, which was created to implement the goals of the Senior Summit held in November 2008. Expand membership on the Senior Sub-cabinet by appointing an officer of the Commission on Aging as a full participant on the Sub-cabinet. Include on the Senior Sub-cabinet representation from the Vital Living Committee, and a liaison from the County Executive's Office. Ensure full participation by the decision-makers in all departments that affect seniors.

Please respond to: Elaine Kotell Binder, Chair
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